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GENERAL DEBATE

Letter dated 4 October 1996 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Yugoslavia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I am writing to you concerning the statement made by Mr. Tritan Shehu, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania, on 30 September 1996 in the general debate of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly and, upon instructions of my Government, I have the honour to inform you of the following.

Mr. Shehu took the opportunity to reiterate Albania's usual unsubstantiated and gross attacks on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In this way, he demonstrated before the broadest international forum that the new Albanian Government has not refrained from pursuing the policy of flagrant interference in the internal affairs of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, contesting its territorial integrity and instigating ethnic Albanian separatism in Kosovo and Metohija.

At a time when the entire international community is commending the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia for its constructive and peaceful policy and its great contribution to the successful implementation of the Dayton/Paris Peace Agreement and the reaching of stable peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Albanian Minister for Foreign Affairs is making an effort to contest this. By resorting to unfounded accusations and the grossest qualifications, Mr. Shehu is deliberately spreading falsities about Kosovo and Metohija and the status of the Albanian minority in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

By insisting on the "right to self-determination" of the Albanian national minority on the basis of "living there for thousands of years" and recognition of the non-existent "Republic of Kosovo", Albania is directly supporting the separatists in Kosovo and Metohija in their effort to threaten the territorial

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integrity of a sovereign State, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Despite the fact that the Charter of the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe documents do not provide for the right of national minorities to self-determination, the Republic of Albania is committed to the creation of an additional Albanian State in the Balkans through secession of Kosovo and Metohija from the Republic of Serbia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Such Albanian position has recently encouraged separatist extremists to undertake terrorist action in Kosovo and Metohija, from which Albania has never distanced itself.

On many occasions, the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has used arguments to bring to the attention of the United Nations and other international forums that violation of the human rights of, or repression against, members of the Albanian national minority is not at stake in Kosovo and Metohija. Under the present Constitution and laws, members of the Albanian national minority have equal rights and duties as all other citizens of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In addition, they enjoy individual and collective rights envisaged for national minorities. Moreover, the entire population of Kosovo and Metohija is entitled to territorial autonomy. What is at stake, however, is that under the pressure of its separatist leaders and with Albania's assistance, members of the Albanian national minority refuse to exercise these rights and are deliberately boycotting political and State institutions of the Republic of Serbia.

The Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has continuously endeavoured to establish a direct dialogue with the representatives of the Albanian national minority and seek solutions to the outstanding issues by democratic means and through legal institutions. The recent agreement on normalization of education in Kosovo and Metohija, which was commended internationally, including in Albania, shows that it is possible to resolve any issue through dialogue and by political means. This agreement asserts the policy of national equality pursued by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and constitutes a signpost in the normalization of the overall situation in Kosovo and Metohija.

All Balkan States have national minorities, which could be a bridge to neighbourly cooperation, while respecting the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the countries in which they live. This orientation prevails in most of the countries in the region, and it is the basis of Yugoslavia's policy towards its neighbours. In contrast, Albania uses its minority in neighbouring countries as an instrument of its aspirations towards creating Greater Albania, thus causing disputes with practically all of its neighbours. This is evident also from Mr. Shehu's statement. At the same time, Albania is being restrictive regarding the rights of national minorities in its own territory. Albania denies the existence of Serbian and Montenegrin minorities and deprives them of all individual and collective rights, including the right to use their proper names.

A question arises as to whether the Republic of Albania considers that, by pursuing such a policy, it truly renders a "significant contribution to the

implementation of the Dayton accords", as Mr. Shehu was pleased to underline in his statement at the rostrum of the General Assembly. Certainly not. Albania's support to the separatist aspirations in Kosovo and Metohija and its dream of creating Greater Albania constitute a threat to peace and good-neighbourliness in the region.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 9.

(Signed) Vladislav JOVANOVIĆ
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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